Police can't allow eco-extremists to disrupt daily life

The Times (London)

October 19, 2022 Wednesday

Edition 1, National Edition

Copyright 2022 Times Newspapers Limited All Rights Reserved

THE TIMES

Section: NEWS; Pg. 30

Length: 400 words

Byline: Jawad Iqbal

Body

The antics of Just Stop Oil climate protesters have caused chaos in London by blocking roads and holding up traffic in support of their demand that the government end the use of fossil fuels.

They have also managed to turn the Metropolitan Police into a laughing stock: video footage shows large groups of police officers standing around at protest sites, doing little to clear the obstructions.

The apparent paralysis on the part of the police has allowed ecoprotesters free rein to wreak havoc, stopping people from going to work or attending hospital appointments. There was gridlock in west London during one protest, which prevented an ambulance and fire engine responding to emergency calls.

Again and again members of the public are left venting their frustration at the police before taking it upon themselves to try to unblock the roads. Do we really want people to take the law into their own hands?

Sir Mark Rowley, the new commissioner of the Met, pleads that his hands are tied. He maintains that the protests don't meet the legal threshold that they are causing "serious disruption to the life of the community".

Try telling that to those affected. He goes on to explain that the threshold for action has to be agreed with "partners" such as Transport for London (TfL) or the relevant local authority before his officers can step in.

Why are the police having to jump through such bureaucratic hoops?

The commissioner needs to show leadership and demand changes to these outdated processes. Sadiq Khan, the London mayor, is similarly lacking in leadership. Khan is in charge of TfL, and it has been suggested that injunctions could be used to combat the disruption by protesters who have blocked roads to emergency services including ambulances. The injunctions would first have to be requested by TfL.

The right to protest is vital in any free society but the juvenile stunts of the eco-warriors make a mockery of such freedoms by treating with contempt the rights of others to go about their lawful work and business.

The Met must stop making excuses.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, passed earlier this year, gives police greater powers to arrest protesters who "wilfully obstruct" highways, with a maximum penalty of a year in jail. It is time to start using the laws at their disposal. Jawad Iqbal is a freelance writer

Do we really want people to take the law into their own hands?

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Journal Code: TIM

Subject: NEGATIVE MISC NEWS (91%); NEGATIVE NEWS (90%); AMBULANCE & RESCUE SERVICES (89%); CRIME, LAW ENFORCEMENT & CORRECTIONS (89%); EMERGENCY SERVICES (89%); NEGATIVE PERSONAL NEWS (89%); ARRESTS (78%); ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES (78%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (78%); POLICE FORCES (78%); SAFETY, ACCIDENTS & DISASTERS (78%); TRENDS & EVENTS (78%); ECOTERRORISM (77%); EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (74%); FREELANCE EMPLOYMENT (73%); WRITERS (73%); BASKETBALL (69%); SENTENCING (65%); JAIL SENTENCING (60%)

Company: METROPOLITAN BANK HOLDING CORP (58%)

Ticker: MCB (NYSE) (58%)

Industry: NAICS522110 COMMERCIAL BANKING (58%); SIC6029 COMMERCIAL BANKS, NEC (58%); ENERGY & UTILITIES (90%); ENERGY CONSUMPTION (90%); AMBULANCE & RESCUE SERVICES (89%); EMERGENCY VEHICLES (89%); EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (74%); WRITERS (73%)

Person: SADIQ KHAN (79%)

Geographic: LONDON, ENGLAND (92%); National Edition

Load-Date: October 19, 2022

End of Document